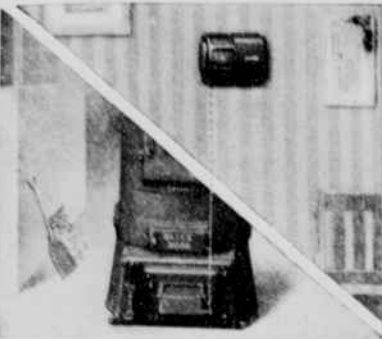


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terrible homesickness which made him yearn for his own big hills, trees, and mountain air. He looked down from his window at the crowds in the street. They did not look like the human beings he had known all his life: they were clothed differently, they were in a perpetual rush. Honest Joe wondered if he had not better buy new clothing, and then snorted at himself and spoke aloud:

"You'll buy nothin'! Spend money you borrowed on fancy duds! What's the matter with you? Ashamed to be seen in your old white hat and with your pants tucked in your boots, when Maw's waitin' for you, in her gingham, away off out there—"

His voice broke and he gulped heavily; then, determined, he clapped the old hat with the four dents on his head, walked down the five flights of stairs, and confronted the clerk behind the desk.

"Can you tell me where I'll find Toluse Oakes; that is, Thomas Maples Oakes?" he asked.

The clerk looked somewhat puzzled. It seemed impossible that this "old ray" could mean that he wanted to see the famous financier. "What is he, a banker, corporation man?"

"I reckon that must be him," assented Honest Joe.

The clerk consulted a telephone book. "If it's the one you mean," he said, smiling to himself, "there is such a man at No. A Wall street."

At the dubious look on his guest's face he suggested not unkindly, "It's a long walk for a young man, let alone an— Maybe you'd best take a taxi."

"Nope," answered the Westerner. "Walk-in'll do. I can't spare the money for any fool rides. Just tell me how to get there, and I'll find it."

In hours, after being jostled, and shoved, and lost, and asking many times for directions, he came to the huge skyscraper in the narrow street, and, somewhat afraid of the elevators, climbed twenty flights of painful stairs, which robbed him of breath at intervals and necessitated rests on landings. He gave a troubled sigh when he saw that nearly all the doors bore the name of his friend, and at last in desperation tried one. He was sent to another, and there found himself confronted by a smart young man who sniffed at him superciliously and asked to know his business. He started quite guilelessly to tell what had brought him there; but the impatient youth impolitely interrupted him in the midst of a sentence and disappeared through a door while some of those in the waiting room snickered audibly. In but a minute a very busy appearing clerk came out and said curtly:

"Mr. Thomas Oakes is not here; but perhaps you could explain your business to me and save time."  
Something in the clerk's impatient attitude warned Honest Joe that to talk would be to find dismissal, and for an instant he was perplexed. "No, young man, you won't do at all," he said. "Nobody'll do but Mr. Oakes. It's him I come to see. He's an old friend of mine, and—"

He was surprised and angry when the young man shrugged and deliberately walked away. He could not know that there were scores of applicants each day, impetuous, who made similar and unfounded pretenses for gaining the great financier's ear. Another clerk came after a time, a most haughty young person, who wanted to know what he was waiting for, asked if he had an appointment, and when told that he had not said he must get one, but did not explain how. Noon came, and for a time Honest Joe had the reception room to himself. Afternoon crept around, and new faces appeared and disappeared. The sun worked westward, and still he sat, until he was the last one waiting, still patient, but very distressed. Office boys grinned at him, clerks passing through the room stared and smiled, and at last the first smart youth he had met got his hat from a wardrobe and said cheerily:

"Well, Mister, I'm afraid you'll have to get out. We're done for the day."  
"But about seein' Toluse—I mean Mr. Oakes?" protested Honest Joe, palpably disappointed.

"Oh, he's gone hours ago," carelessly replied the youth, slamming a little gate that barred his precinct from the public.  
For a moment the queer visitor looked at the floor, and then out at the window, and up at the clock. "All right," he said. "I'll have to come tomorrow. Of course I know that Toluse must be mighty busy; but it don't seem quite like him to keep me waitin' so long without even comin' out to say howdy. I'll come tomorrow, Son."

AND he did, just two hours before the offices were opened; for seven o'clock meant time to open the store out where he lived and considered himself a business man. Patiently he put in another whole day; but night found him annoyed to the point of

anger, and obstinate. On the next day he appeared and declared himself.

"Son," he said sharply, "I'm goin' to see Oakes, just to tell him what I think of him, if nothin' else. When I come here I want to see Oakes—do you understand that?"

The boy looked into the old man's face and disappeared. In a few minutes he returned accompanied by the busy young man who once before had ignored him; but now this young man was very polite, and studied the visitor's eyes with much care before saying he would see what could be done about it, and departed. There was another wait, and a man in the uniform of a private officer appeared and asked the visitor curtly what he wanted to see Mr. Oakes for. In spite of his anger Honest Joe saw that this man proposed to give him an impartial hearing. He began to explain that the wanted Mr. Oakes was a friend of his in the old days. The officer looked troubled and cut him short. He too disappeared.

"That old guy out there's no crank!" he snorted contemptuously, as he made his report to the clerk who had summoned him. "You fellows here get scared stiff every time you see somebody who looks different from everybody else. Quickest and easiest way to get rid of that old cuss is to let him see the boss, tell what he's come for, get turned down, and then he'll go peaceable. I don't want to chuck that poor old rube out for nothin' at all."

TEN minutes later the youth that guarded the door appeared. "Mr. Oakes will see you for five minutes. Come this way."

Honest Joe's heart leaped with joy. Surely Toluse would listen to him longer than five minutes could he but reach him! And then he was shocked to a standstill; for he found himself in a luxurious office, staring at a clean-cut, crisp-looking man of about thirty-five, who swung round toward him and said:

"I'm Mr. Oakes. What do you wish?"

It took Honest Joe nearly a minute to recover himself, and then he said, "You're Mr. Oakes? Pshaw! They's some mistake. The man I want to see is a heap older. It's Thomas Maples Oakes I want to talk to."

"That," said the young man impatiently, "is my father. He is in Europe. I attend to everything when he is absent, and most of the time when he is here. If it is anything of a business nature, and he were here, he would probably refer you to me. Now what is it you wish, Mr. —"

"Barnes—Joe Barnes from Caballeros." The younger man stared at him steadily for an instant, and then smiled a little to himself. "It does seem to me that I have heard my father speak of you. But that's not quite the name. Do they call you—"

"Maybe he said Honest Joe."

The young man smiled more broadly, and with a more kindly air directed his visitor to a seat, into which, distressed beyond measure, disappointed, tired, the old man sunk. All his trip had come to this, that he must tell his plans to strange and probably unsympathetic ears! This younger man in front of him was a development of new times, new ideas, where old friendships carried no weight, and all was measured by dollars. But surely there must be some traits of the old blood here! This must be a son of the father, and moreover he could do nothing else than try to explain his proposals, now that Toluse was far beyond reach. He rallied himself to the effort.

"It's about an irrigation scheme," he said steadily. "I've been watching a canyon out there for a long time, and seen the land settle and get valuable, and always thought how easy it'd be to build a reservoir up there in Candle Pass to water maybe a hundred thousand acres of land. I've taken up the place that would do for a reservoir as a home-stand, and I've got options for a dollar an acre on a lot of other land we'd need. Also I got an engineer to say how much he thinks the dam could be built for, and, what with spring freshets and the creek, he opines we could make a good thing out of it. I figured out it ought to pay about ten per cent. on all the money it costs."

He paused and rested his keen old eyes on the younger man, whose close-set mustache did not conceal a skeptical smile.

"Well, what do you want of my father?" he demanded, in a bored tone of voice.

"I want him to go in on it—to furnish the money."

The financier calmly adjusted some bronze desk fittings to his satisfaction, glanced at an ornate clock that stood in the corner of his office, and then spoke with averted eyes, as if secretly amused. "Irrigation schemes haven't paid, and haven't been in our line, Mr. Barnes. Besides, my father has retired from active participation in this business for some years. I wouldn't consider it for a moment. My father wouldn't consider it if he were here."

He glanced at Honest Joe, who had settled

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